In a recent paper Dr. N. DATTA-MAJUMDER, Director, Department of Anthropology, Government of India, writes:

"From a study of 34 Onge families contacted by us, it is found that the average size of the family is only 3.15. Thirteen families out of 34 are childless. That is, 38.2% of the married couples are sterile".

When, in 1946, proposals were made for undertaking work for the amelioration of the conditions of the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands along the same line as had been done among the Bhil and other tribes of Central India, Dr. B. S. GUHA, at that time Director of the Department of Anthropology, very reasonably observed that "the problem of the aborigines of the Andaman Islands is not the same as that of the other primitive tribes of India", and that "the need among them is not so much the spread of education and social uplift as the arrest in the decline in population which has been most alarming".

The Ongi have been in sporadic contact with the outside world for many years. They have been visiting Port Blair, particularly since some of them moved to Rutland Island on the southern tip of Great Andaman. This contact with civilization was bound to affect their material culture, as well as their whole mentality. We may again quote Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER who says:

"As a result of this long contact the Onge have already come to appreciate a number of foreign articles, for example, tobacco leaves, tea leaves, sugar, matches, aluminium utensils and implements made of iron (especially bill-hooks and files). In order to secure these articles, they often barter away their valuable honey and shells. The afore-mentioned changes in material culture have at present touched only the fringe of Onge culture. But the demand for these articles (especially tobacco leaves and safety matches) is becoming so great that Onge culture is likely to be vitally affected in the near future".

Dr. DATTA-MAJUMDER came to the conclusion that "the hunting and food-gathering Onge culture, which had been an autonomous cultural system in the past, is now breaking down".

The Ongi were repeatedly visited by government officers, but the resulting information is paltry. PORTMAN spent several months among the coastal groups of Little Andaman in 1886 and 1887 and collected a few hundred words of their language. In 1901, C. BODEN KLOSS visited a group of Ongi on Rutland Island and one on Little Andaman, both only for a few hours. At some time between 1906 and 1908, A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN went to Little Andaman for several weeks and made a preliminary study of the Ongi language. In 1928, EGON VON EICKSTEDT spent a few weeks among the Ongi on Rutland Island and visited briefly several groups on the coast of Little Andaman for the sake of physical anthropological research.

9:Sarkar D-5 (1948) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Jarawa

Another item of material culture found during the above expedition was a few unbaked pots which show that the Jarawa manufacture earthenware articles – an art not reported so far from among the Onge. Coiled pottery was known among the Andamanese (MAN, 1932). It can be found in the Andamanese kitchen middens as well.

The present writer had the opportunity of being twice after the trail of the South Andaman Jarawa in the year 1948. During these two tours a large number of ethnographic objects of the Jarawa was collected. They are now deposited at the office of the Anthropological Survey of India [1], Indian Museum, Calcutta.

It was known that the Jarawa were using Bluff and Spike Islands as temporary halting stations in their to-and-fro migrations from South Andaman to Middle Andaman. In September 1938, a pregnant Jarawa woman and four young children (SARKAR, 1952) were captured while they were crossing on a raft on the coast off Bluff Island. A few of their haunts were known to the then officers of the local forest department.

In 1948 while the present writer was camping at Long Island, studying the Andamanese, two such opportunities of visiting the Jarawa areas arose. The presence of the Jarawa north of Port Anson was reported to us. We left for Port Anson in a motor launch on March 7th 1948, in the company of an Andamanese – whose canoe was tied behind our launch – under the leadership, of Mr. Joseph, the then Sub-divisional Officer of the forest department. We had one gun only and a *dao* (billhook) each.

Fig. 2

We passed through Homfray Strait and, reaching Port Anson, we went along the western coast of Middle Andaman. We then anchored our vessel off Foul Bay and came ashore in the Andamanese canoe. This flat open coast is known to be a good place for deer hunting and the animals could be seen from the sea. When the deer were not seen from the canoe we presumed that some human beings had been there shortly before; we suspected them to be Jarawa. Soon we discovered on the beach small footprints, which both Mr. JOSEPH and the Andamanese recognized as Jarawa ones. We traced them inside the jungle and came across a small fire which was still smouldering. A few yards away we found two bags for carrying water made of leaves (fig. 2) which were still wet. The few drops therein tasted sweet. We walked about for some time since the footprints could no longer be traced. There seemed to have been only two people. We then came to Bluff Island along the east coast of Spike Island but found nothing of the Jarawa.

[1] Thanks are due to its Director, Professor NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE for his kindness in helping the writer with the illustrations of this paper.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Arioto

a furious aversion to foreigners. This hatred has been rekindled during the last hundred years by a number of unfortunate incidents, but at one time the islanders were favourably disposed towards seafarers passing by, if we are to believe Niccolo dei Conti and Cesare Federici, fleeting visitors to the islands in 1440 and 1569. They both wrote of the peaceful native canoes that approached their ships, and this is confirmed by other travellers, like the Italians Fra Odorico da Pordenone in 1332 and Giovan Francesco Gemelli Caresi in 1709.

Violent clashes with the coastal tribes only became frequent when the English began to take an interest in the Andamans as a possible penal colony. The first prisoners to be sent there were some Indians, in 1788. In 1796 the colony was abolished owing to the swift death of nearly all the prisoners from tropical diseases. The attempt was repeated in 1858 after a mission entrusted to F. Mouat, and this time the seeds of decline for the islanders were sown. Efforts were begun to approach the coastal peoples, and even, strangely enough, those of the forests, the now ferocious Jarawas. Some of these tentative overtures were well received, but once the islanders came to think they had been betrayed it was enough to rekindle the hatred of strangers which they have retained ever since.

The evidence obtainable from archaeological excavations shows that for thousands of years the people encountered by the English in the coastal areas were the sole inhabitants of Great Andaman, living by fishing rather than by hunting or cultivation in the forests. The Jarawas arrived later. Migration from Little Andaman, imposed in relatively recent times by lack of food, brought them to Great Andaman. Since the entire coastal region was already occupied, the new arrivals took refuge in the forests of the hinterland. There they were happy, for they found an abundance of wild honey and fruit which amply fulfilled their needs. A spontaneous equilibrium was established between the coast-people and the forest-people, and both prospered.

The arrival of an appreciable number of foreigners in 1858 immediately changed the situation. The peoples of the coast, who were the most anxious to make friends with the strangers, paid for this fatal error with virtual extermination. When the foreigners had definitely established themselves, the coastal Andamanese – *Arioto*

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

The widespread use of the arrow and spear harpoons since very ancient times is evidenced by their survival in areas far removed from each other, and among primitive peoples geographically completely isolated. The arrival of the harpoon in the Andamans must in all probability have occurred thousands of years ago when it was widespread at least in the south and south-east of the Asian continent. Even the Andamanese canoes with their platforms fore and aft built specially for the harpoon throwers indicate not only the antiquity of the islanders, but also their historical and cultural connection with the peoples represented today by the few remaining Negritos.

From the evidence of the middens it is clear that the links between the Onges and the Jarawas are very close. While the date of the first migration from Little Andaman to Great Andaman remains uncertain there can be no doubt that migrations took place, followed by isolation within the islands, until today the Arioto cannot understand the Eremtaga, and the Onges neither the Jarawas nor the Sentinellese. There is very little in the literature on the Jarawas and their origin, but from my own observations I would deduce that they arrived in Great Andaman comparatively recently, as even their subsequent rigid isolation has not brought about any really essential cultural differences from the Onges.

The route of the migration will undoubtedly have led them via Rutland, whose heights can be seen as an open invitation from the north of Little Andaman. Chains of small, uninhabited islands lie between; the Onges have a name for all of them and have camp sites there for use on hunting or fishing expeditions; the Arioto, on the other hand, do not appear ever to have been to the islands. From Rutland migrations would have moved on to Great Andaman, until, filtering through to the extreme north, they became the Jarawas, or 'strangers', as the Arioto still call them. The Arioto themselves probably arrived previously by the same route but stopped in the coastal areas, then uninhabited and inviting occupation. The Arioto would have considered themselves owners of the still uninhabited areas and tried to exclude later immigrants; so began the hostility I have already described between the occupiers of the coasts and the later arrivals whom they forced into the depths of the forests.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

All the evidence points to this being far more than mere supposition and even today the Onges persist in their tendency to expand towards the north. In 1953 I could find no trace of a number of Onges whom I had known in 1952; the others told me they were all 'dead', but it seems probable that they had migrated to the islands further north. And in 1954 nearly all the canoes belonging to the communal huts in the south-west of Little Andaman, which I had seen in 1953, had vanished and were said to have gone with the 'dead'. It is probable that they too had migrated to Great Andaman, becoming 'Jarawas'.

This is physically quite possible. Between Little Andaman and Great Andaman the Onges have a line of transit camps, still in use, where food and water are easily available. All have a name, and I followed the line myself. With the help of their fragile but very fast canoes, and without carrying food or water (which they know will be available at the next transit camp), they can travel very quickly. They take fire with them in the canoes in the form of a burning torch and while they are at sea, unlike the lazy pace of their normal attitude to life, they seem possessed by the desire to reach the next stopping point on terra firma.

Moreover, one may deduce from the fact that the names of these transit camps are all in the Onge language that the migrations have always been from south to north. Little Andaman, formed as it is mainly of coral banks and only projecting a short way above the sea, disappears from view in the tropical mists a few kilometres from the shore; from Rutland it is invisible, and as the Andamanese only travel by sea with land in sight or when its existence and direction is well known, no one from the north would have dared to travel south into the unknown.

We have already seen that the ignorance of the present-day Jarawas as regards the sea is no bar to a hypothesis of their original arrival in Great Andaman by sea. Colebrook, a hundred and fifty years ago, actually saw them with canoes, and Gilbert Rogers[1] recorded seeing canoes on the coasts of North Sentinel very similar to those of the Onges today. The accumulation, therefore, of this evidence and the general similarity of culture throughout the archipelago all adds up to inescapable conclusions.

Even the unique dances enjoyed by the Onges are to be seen

[1] *Andaman and Nicobar Gazetteer*, 2 January 1904.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Even the unique dances enjoyed by the Onges are to be seen among the Jarawas, with the characteristic marking of the rhythm by slapping the calves against the buttocks. This does not seem to have been a feature of the Arioto dances, in which the rhythm was by the *pukuta yemnga*, a kind of convex shield made of the very hard and aromatic red wood (*Pterocarpus dalbergoides*) which the termites never seem to attack. I was able to obtain one of these shields, the last that the twenty-three surviving Arioto possessed and the only musical instrument in the islands. It is played by one man with his feet, while the dancers, male and female, form lines on each side of him a short distance away. Before use the convex face is decorated with lines of white ochre and chains of tusk shells are hung from a hole at the end opposite to the one on which the player's feet beat; from the same hole runs a cord, which he holds in his hand to prevent the instrument moving away from him as he beats. The players change from time to time as the dancers shuffle on and on for hours in the light of the resin torches. But apart from the instrument itself, the rhythmic hand-clapping and the dancers singing in unison are the same throughout the Andamans.

The women clap their hands in rhythm, and then slap one thigh with the open palm of one hand, the other hand clasping the wrist, singing all the time. The men dance in Indian file, beating the ground first with the right heel, then with the left, the toes barely raised from the ground, moving a short way forward each time. As they dance they lean forward, then with hands clasped and their fingers interlaced. There are variations, but the basic step is always the same.

One difference between the Onges and the Jarawas is that in the latter both sexes are naked, while the Onge women have in recent times adopted the *naquineghe* or apron. Complete nudity was a characteristic of all the Negritos, including the Semang and Aetà, and the Jarawa migrations probably took place before the introduction of the *naquineghe*.

The present inability of the three peoples to understand each other is more a question of pronunciation than of difference in actual words. To examine the question fully it would be necessary to collect a large number of words and analyse their affinity; meanwhile we know that despite their inability to understand each other there is a close resemblance between the language of the Jarawas and Sentinellese and that of the Onges. Strict isolation can lead to